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Best Wishes to

FRED WADA

From Huntington Park
Rotary Club

Rudy Griego
Club President
1984-85

ROTARY IS . . .

ROTARY is a service organization of business and professional men united worldwide who conduct humanitarian projects, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations and work toward world understanding and peace.

ROTARY is approximately 1 million service-minded men belonging to over 20,000 Rotary Clubs in 159 countries. Membership is by invitation.

ROTARY meets weekly, not just to eat but to enjoy each other's fellowship and discuss how they can serve others. Every hour of every day a Rotary Club meets somewhere in the world.

ROTARY is compassion for the underprivileged, the underfed and the disabled, many of whom are the beneficiaries of 25,000 service projects conducted by Rotary Clubs in the world each year.

ROTARY adds fulfillment to the lives of more than 7000 young people each year of secondary age as they study in a country other than their own.

ROTARY FOUNDATION contributes approximately 20 million dollars in graduate scholarships and for group study exchanges each year to promote international understanding.

ROTARY sponsors INTERACT, over 4000 service clubs for young people of secondary age in some 79 countries.

ROTARY sponsors ROTARACT, some 4000 service clubs for young adults between 18 and 28 in approximately 90 countries.

ROTARY began in 1905 in Chicago. International Headquarters is in Evanston, Illinois, where 29 different languages are spoken.

ROTARY, for the last 10 years, has been growing at the extraordinary rate of a new club every 18½ hours.

OPENING CALL

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WELCOME

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Dinner Co-Chairperson

SPECIAL THOUGHTS

David Shigekawa

Master of Ceremonies

TOAST

Consul General

Yoshifumi Matsuda

Consul General of Japan

DINNER

Slide Presentation and

Music by "Mothra"

TRIBUTES

Tom Maruyama

Sidney Kronenthal

PRESENTATIONS

Japan Chamber of Commerce
and Industry

Japanese Chamber of Commerce
of Southern California

Japanese Retirement Home

HONOREE—FRED ISAMU WADA

*Chairman, Board of Trustees,
Japanese Retirement Home*

**"Towards A Golden Horizon
Building Campaign"**

Edwin Hiroto

*Administrator
Japanese Retirement Home*

Slide Presentation

CLOSING REMARKS

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Co-Chairperson



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Music by "Mothra"
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Danny Yamamoto, Drums
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Fred Isamu WADA



There is this story about the time Fred Wada drove an acquaintance into *nibon-machi* for a bite of *sushi*. It was a bright, sunny May Day and, in observance of the holiday, the restaurant had the traditional lacquered-paper carp tethered to a tall pole, billowing in the wind. Upon seeing this, Fred flashed that quick, cocky smile of his and said, "See, they knew I was coming. They're flying my flag."

The story is apocryphal but the point is indisputable: Fred Isamu Wada—for all 77 years of his good times and hard—has been as close to fishing as Sears was to Roebuck and Proctor to Gamble. Traveling the world over, he has seldom been out of reach-

ing distance of rod and reel. He has pulled his share of trout out of the Waikato in New Zealand, dorada from the Amazon, and char from the cold, mountainous lakes of Alaska. The aquarium in Ueno Park in Tokyo has on display an enormous 260 lb. marlin Fred reeled in off the shores of Bimini; and, dominating a wall off of a staircase in his home is a six-foot tarpon, caught off of the Florida Keys. That was the season he won a trophy for catching the most tarpon—a record 43 of them!

Putting things in perspective from Fred's viewpoint, it can be said that fishing is his destiny; fruits and vegetables his livelihood; and philanthropy his delight. He is a descendant of fish-

ermen who, for generations, worked the western shores of Wakayama prefecture where the waters of the strait of Kii run warm into Osaka Bay. It was from one of the tiny villages that dot this shoreline—during the years when the fishing was scant—that his father, Zembei, joined a group of young men who boarded a ship bound for Vancouver, British Columbia. The time was the early 1890's and

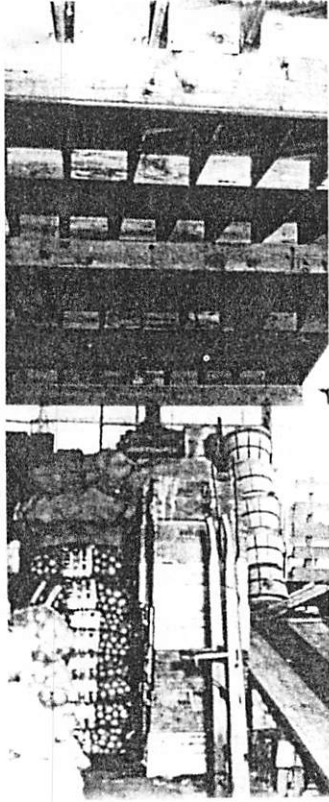


some who preceded had written excitedly about this place where—during the spawning season—the straits and inlets were so thick with Chinook and Sockeye that the waters literally churned with salmon seeking the seine.

Some years later, when Zembei Wada had wearied of the uncertainties of a fisherman's life and decided to settle down, he took his savings and invested in a little restaurant some forty miles south in the town of Bellingham, Washington. Arrangements were made through a *batsbakunin* for



Fred Isamu WADA



a bride selected from photographs and a suitable one was found in a nearby Wakayama village of Totsui. Her name was Tamae Kawabata and from his marriage, in rapid succession, came four children. The first of these was Fred Isamu.

When Fred was less than six years of age, his mother returned to Totsui with her children. She was to die a year later, leaving the children in the care of her parents. While Fred remembers little of Bellingham, the wide-eyed childhood days in Totsui-mura made a lasting effect upon him.

The village hugged a bay and life depended upon the food that could be gathered from it. Survival had shaped fishing into a communal enterprise. Those with strong nimble fingers would mend the nets and those with the sharpest eyes would—from the

heights that overlooked the bay—take their turn in watching for schools of fish that might enter their waters. On those propitious occasions, the lookouts would sound a horn fashioned from a conch shell and wave a large flag. The color of the flag would indicate the size of the fish and, thus, the size of the net to be used. White meant small; yellow was medium; and lo?, when the red flag flew, excitement abounded as the largest of the nets was readied.

At these times, when the duties had acknowledged prayers whispered over smoldering incense, everyone from tottering grandparent to excited child would rush to their appointed task. When the fish had been netted, runners would be sent out to bring

fish brokers to bid on the day's catch. After the final sale had been consummated, all that was unsold would be divided equally among the villagers.

It was a way of life where the survival of the group was dependant upon the contribution of each individual. Consequently, the welfare of each was the concern of all. This philosophy, observed by the child, remained ingrained in the man.

Another attitude is owed to those early years. When he was twelve, a letter arrived requesting his return to America. His grandfather accompanied him to Kobe to see him board a ship to Seattle where Zembei, having sold his Bellingham restaurant, was now in the wholesale produce business. As they said their

goodbyes, the older man passed along his advice. "Live a good, full life," he said. "Care for yourself and other as well." Finally, "When it comes for you to die, may it be without money."

This latter perplexed Fred for some time. Working it out from his knowledge of his grandfather and within the context of what had been said, he developed this interpretation: "Money is of no value to the dead. Therefore, use it wisely among the living."

The maturation of Fred Wada—from a child bewildered by two diverse cultures, into a successful businessman who is at ease among head of state as he is among farmhands and produce workers—is an illustration in toughness, determination, sprinkling of





chutzpah, and a hell of a lot of pride.

Shortly after accompanying his father in a move from Seattle to Terminal Island, Fred forfeited formal education for the less structured, hardball curriculum of real life. At 16, he was driving a truck for San Pedro Creamery. A year

and one-half later found him at a fruit stand where, in three months, he became manager. Within two years he had saved enough money to come in with a down on a thousand-dollar ticket for a produce stand in Huntington Park.

It was here that upward mobility went into a stall, if

you will pardon the pun. Keeping alert, he learned that there was a shortage of retail produce stands in the city of Oakland. He cashed in his chips and began working northward as a farm laborer. The last jump was the final fifty miles from San Jose to Oakland. Here, with \$300, he rented space in a butcher shop and set up vegetable stalls.

The advance word proved accurate. By hard work, long hours and careful management, money could be made in retail produce in Oakland. Wiser because of his L.A. experiences, he made an astute move: to better compete with the superchains and benefit from bulk buying, he organized fellow independents into the East Bay Food Dealers Association of which he became the

president.

During this time he made one other astute move that was to contribute to his future success. He married a bright, lovely girl named Masako Tabata from Monterey. Her background was strikingly similar. Her father, too, had migrated from the same region in Wakayama to Vancouver and, after a period of time, abandoned fishing to farm on the outskirts of Ogden, Utah where Masako had been born. She had also spent part of her childhood in Japan.

The marriage proved to be a happy and fruitful one. Grace was the first-born, followed by Fred, Jr. By 1941, when the third child, Mary, arrived, Fred seemed to have life pretty much under control. Then, came that fateful first Sunday in December. Despite all who vouched for his loyalty and the many contributions he had made to the general community he was damned—as would be 120,000 others—by ancestry. A choice was given: he had two months to relocate outside of a designated area or, he would be forcibly evacuated into an internment camp.

Fred went for the first. He heard that there was a need for farm laborers in Utah, so he went into Salt Lake City where he rented a car and searched the rural areas until he found someone who would lease him 3,500 acres of land surrounding an abandoned mining town called Keetley.



Fred Isamu WADA

After clearing the matter with Governor Maw of Utah, he put the front money down and brought in 25 families, consisting of some 130 people. If the communal operation of this farm bore any similarity to life in a Wakayama fishing village during the early years of this century, the coincidence was not altogether surprising.

Actually, what Fred had leased was a pig in a poke. His visit to Keetley took place during the latter part of February when the land was just a mass of snow as far as the eye could see. It stood at an elevation of

close to 5,000 feet and the spring had arrived late revealing deep gulches, sagebrush and huge rocks. Fred laughs at the recollection,

"When I first saw it the snow had leveled everything. When the snow melted it was all hilly with rocks and sagebrush. Hell, we had to move fifty tons of rocks to clear 150 acres to farm."

Yet, through hard, back-straining work, the new inhabitants of Keetley were able to bring strawberries, potatoes, peas, spinach and cabbage out of barren ground that for eons had known little besides boulders, sagebrush, the usual assortment of snakes, lizards and a stray jackrabbit or two. Despite all the sweat and pain, the venture ended up a bust, the marking of time until war's end when the colony dispersed to pick up their lives. Fred, Masako and the family

which had been increased by a fourth child, Edwin, moved into the Miyako Hotel in Los Angeles.

Back at Square One. This time when he went into Huntington Park, it was as an experienced pro with a track record. The honchos who ran the wholesale produce markets in the Bay Area passed the word to L.A. that they would stand behind his credit. He was back in retail produce and if there was anything he knew like the back of his hand, this was it. Business prospered and branches sprung up like *sushi-yas* in the Valley. "We had them

all over—17 or 18 of them—we even were in the Grand Central Market downtown."

The keystone to the

chain was the supermarket that takes up the entire corner of the triangular intersection of Florence, California, and Salt Lake Avenues in Huntington Park. Sold two years ago, the last of his stores still carries his name: "Farmer Fred", it says across two walls of the building and with it are giant-sized portraits of Fred in bib overalls. If the features are more Caucasian than Oriental, so be it.

Fred's activities as a liaison between the U.S. and Japan in amateur athletics probably began in 1949 when he housed Japanese swimmers during the time they were training and competing in Southern California. His growing reputation in sports led to his most recent appointment to

THANKS

FRED WADA

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Fred Isamu WADA

the executive ranks of the L.A. Olympic Organizing Committee.

Unexpectedly, it was his dedicated interest in the athletic prowess of the young that led to his deep concern for the aging. He was in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1959, drumming up support for Tokyo's bid for the 1964 Summer Olympics when he began to observe that the major concern of the Brazilian Japanese were projects involving specialized housing and medical care for the community's

aging and indigent. Having entered his fifties, the time when most men become aware of their mortality, he began to listen and participate in the discussions.

By the time he'd returned to L.A. his mind was pretty well made up. He told Masako of his plan to sell everything and move down to Sao Paulo to join their crusade to build nursing and retirement homes for the Brazilian Issei. Masako, in wifely fashion, brought domestic logic to temper her husband's zeal. She agreed that facilities sympathetic to the unique cultural, culinary and linguistic of the aging Nikkei was a need that was imminent, but if these were important in Brazil, they were just as important in Southern California.

It was a time when concern about age and health care had moved to the fore

among the local Nikkei community. The Fickett Street Japanese Hospital was being turned over to younger hands who would, in short time, take over City View Hospital and Fred joined this group. He was instrumental in the purchase of land and the construction of the Keiro Home in 1969, and the acquisition of the Minami Keiro in 1973. Then, less than two years later, the group learned that the Jewish Home For the Aged on Boyle Avenue was up for sale.

While Fred spearheaded a most successful fund drive that led to the purchase of the Jewish Home, his most significant con-

tribution probably took place in those intense, private little meetings when the final price was being negotiated.

Years of haggling in the rough-and-tumble world of wholesale markets had honed Fred's talents for bargaining into a fine art. One can find parallels be-



Best Wishes

FRED WADA

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Fred Isamu WADA

tween this and his sport fishing talents. When the line snaps and the rod bends, he is able to sense by the pull on the line, the size of the fish. Intuitively, he knows when to play out the line and when to reel in. Between the directors of the Jewish Home and Fred, it was a contest between skilled adversaries. The asking price was several million. The line was played out and reeled in—the price was brought down to \$1.2 where neither would budge. Stalemate.

If you gamble, be ready to lose. If you bluff, expect to be caught. The secret to bargaining is to remember that there will always be another day; another hand

can be dealt; there are always more fish. Fred's offer was one million even and when the directors continued to shake their heads, he thanked them and made for the door. They could have let him go, but they didn't. He was asked to wait in another room. When he was called back, they'd agreed to the price but without the furniture.

Most would have settled at this point. The original asking price of several million had been based on an unbiased assessment of the prevailing market value. Enormous concessions had been made in his favor. Yet Fred just smiled and shook his head, "One million taps

us out. It's all we can raise. We won't be able to buy new furniture." Again, he prepared to leave.

The directors conferred again and capitulated. Fred could have all the furniture except for one of the three grand pianos and a couple of tables. They shook hands on the deal, but Fred wasn't through yet.

Early on, mention was made of Fred's *chutzpah*. It's a Yiddish term, the best definition being to describe a boy who kills his parents and asks the judge for leniency because he is an orphan. An example of Fred's *chutzpah* became evident right after he had purchased five acres of L.A. city land, completely im-

proved with eleven buildings (one, four-story; another, seven-story) with furniture, landscaped and paved lot all for a bargain basement price. He announced that the one million payment would leave them without money to open and operate the facility.

"Can you guys loan us \$150,000?" he asked.

Damn, if he didn't get it—possibly in admiration, and that, dear friends is what you really call *chutzpah*.

So, what sort of man is Fred Wada? Well, here are some impressions: Although a recent battle with a surgeon may have taken its toll, his physical appearance still denies his years.

Best Wishes

FRED WADA

DENTSU
INCORPORATED
(LOS ANGELES)

Congratulations, Fred

from

Ben & Betty Yumori

Fred Isamu W A D A

His silvery hair is still abundant and neatly combed. He carries himself with pride and confidence. He is a gracious man, comfortable with himself and without pretensions or affectations.

He speaks slowly, choosing his words carefully. When emotions stir him, his voice will rise for emphasis. As it often is with winners, his memory serves his convenience—recalling triumphs and closing off those moments of hurts and pain. He can be imprecise as to details, indifferent as to exact dates. He is a man who works in broad strokes, leaving the details for accountants.

When you consider it,

the specialness about the man may not be his accomplishments, but the miles he had to travel to get there. If life is a horse race where the best carries the most weight, Fred has to be quality because the handicappers really loaded his saddle. They assigned him top weight in language difficulties, limited education, and he was also out there as an independent businessman at a time when California's attitude towards the Japanese had been shaped by U.S. Senators like Hiram Johnson and James Phelan who would refer to them as the "Yellow Peril."

He has not been without honors and recognition. He

has been appointed to the Harbor Commission, served on various Olympic Committees for the U.S. and Japan, named as a High Commissioner of Collegiate Baseball in Japan, served as a director for the California First Bank as well as on the Board of countless other organizations. Awards, plaques and trophies cover almost every available wall in his home with the most recent arrivals stacked along the floor awaiting wall space.

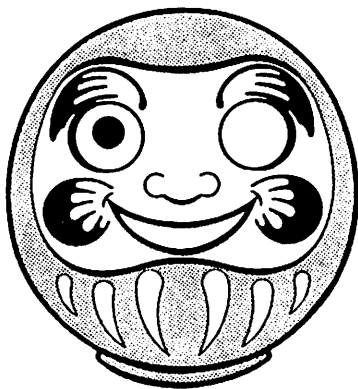
Of all of these symbols of achievement (not counting all the mounted fish that are enough to fill a small lake), the rarest and the most special. One is a framed letter from Presi-

dent Ronald Reagan, thanking him for his work for the L.A. Olympics. The other he received last April: the Yoshikawa Eiji Award given him "for his personal sacrifice and twenty-three years of dedication for the betterment and upgrading of life for the elderly." Fred is especially proud because he is the first foreign-born Japanese to have received this meritorious award.

It is hoped that the special recognition that this evening represents—the appreciation tendered by a community grateful for his services over the past half-century—will also be considered as among his proudest moments.

Fred Wada, we salute you!

CONGRATULATIONS MR. FRED WADA




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